United Nations A/57/PV.50

# General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-seventh session

50th plenary meeting
Thursday, 14 November 2002, 10 a.m.
New York

*President*: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Hussein (Ethiopia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Agenda item 38 (*continued*)**

**The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development**

**Reports of the Secretary-General (A/57/384, A/57/584)**

**Note by the Secretary-General (A/57/336)**

**Draft resolution (A/57/L.20)**

**Mr. Stagno** (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak in my capacity as the Acting President of the Central American Integration System (SICA). I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for the presentation of the report we are now considering.

The recent history of Central America is a living example of the timeliness and soundness of the fundamental principles of the United Nations. Twenty years ago, when the General Assembly considered this item for the first time, our region had plunged into a deep political, economic and military crisis. Some countries had domestic strife. Large Powers were vying for control of the region. Various armed groups tried to seize power. There were hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons. Innumerable violations of human rights were committed. Illicit trafficking in arms endangered the entire region.

At that time, the main concern of the international community was to stop the armed conflict. Twenty years later, the situation could not be more different. The region is at peace now. Democracy has been consolidated. Only last year, free elections were held in Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. All of our nations have undergone very deep-rooted political transformations, as well as economic and social changes, with a view to promoting economic development and building more democratic, more just and more equitable societies. Fundamental rights are being fully observed.

Today, each one of our countries has a human rights defender. This radical improvement is due, above all, to the very strong commitment of our peoples and Governments to peace, democracy and respect for human dignity.

The progress achieved, however, would have been impossible without the continuous political and economic support of the international community in general and of this Organization in particular. In the last two decades, all of the human development indices — life span, literacy rate, level of education and gross domestic product (GDP) per capita — have systematically improved. At the current time, our Governments are committed to continually improving

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these indices through the implementation of social programmes aimed at alleviating poverty and unemployment, improving public security, strengthening the judicial system, consolidating public administration and fighting corruption. Our Governments are, inter alia, making renewed efforts to combat common crime and transnational organized crime, which in recent years have menaced the security of our citizens.

Over the last two decades, our region has enjoyed some periods of economic growth. However, in the past year our economies have deteriorated due to an unfavourable international economic climate and to a fall in exports. Regrettably, our economies continue to be highly sensitive to fluctuations in world markets. For that reason and to ensure sustainable economic development in the region, our countries are negotiating a series of trade agreements with our counterparts outside the region. As well, our countries are making significant efforts to adapt, strengthen and further boost the process of Central American integration, especially in the economic, social, cultural and tourism sectors.

Our Governments have committed themselves to combating the availability of, and traffic in, small arms. A regional meeting was recently held in San José, Costa Rica, to coordinate implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. At the conclusion of the San José meeting, a plan was adopted for national and regional implementation of that Programme of Action.

In the area of the environment, our countries are carrying out efforts to consolidate the Meso-American Biological Corridor. The Corridor consists of a system of natural areas under special administration, multiple-use areas and interconnecting areas; its purpose is to protect biodiversity and to contribute to the quality of life of the inhabitants.

Unfortunately, Central America is highly vulnerable to natural disasters. In recent years, we have been the victim of the devastating hurricanes Mitch, Keith and Michelle, the earthquakes in El Salvador in January 2001 and a drought that afflicted the entire region. Those natural disasters caused the loss of many human lives and substantial material losses. In response to those disasters, our Governments adopted a series of measures to reduce risks and to minimize the effects of natural disasters. Among them are the adoption of the Strategic Framework for the Reduction of Vulnerability and Disasters in Central America and the Central American Five-Year Plan for the Reduction of Vulnerability to and the Impact of Disasters, 2000-2004.

Without doubt, the situation in Central America has improved substantially in the last two decades. However, the process has not yet been completed. We must now consolidate the achievements made and must continue to make progress in the building of societies that are more just, democratic and peaceful. We trust that, on this new path, we will be able to continue to count on the support of the international community, including the United Nations.

In conclusion, I wish to refer to the draft resolution on this subject, issued today in document A/57/L.20. As the principal sponsor, my delegation welcomes any suggestions for the improvement of this text and invites all other delegations to join the list of sponsors. If necessary, we will request the publication of a revised version.

**Mr. Aguilar Zinser** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico shares solid historic, cultural and geographic links with the Central American countries and gives high priority to its bilateral relations with each of them, as well as with the region as a whole. The Government of Mexico has systematically supported the Governments and the peoples of Central America in their efforts to achieve peace and national reconciliation, to strengthen their democratic institutions and to achieve post-conflict social and economic development. That support is reflected in the great number of concrete bilateral and regional cooperation activities in the political, scientific and technical, cultural and educational and economic areas, as well as in emergency humanitarian assistance.

With respect to regional cooperation, my delegation wishes to mention the fifth summit of the Tuxtla dialogue and coordination mechanism, held in June of this year in Mérida, Mexico. On that occasion, heads of State or Government of Central America and Mexico adopted the Mérida Declaration, whose main goal is to create a Meso-American community of nations as a means of achieving greater levels of well-being and sustainable development in the region, within a framework of democracy, respect for human

rights and sustained and permanent peace. The leaders, inter alia, affirmed their support for the Puebla-Panama Plan, a proposal by Mexico to promote economic development, with a sustainable regional vision for strengthening communication links in Central America, in particular the southern part of my country. As well, Mexico has actively participated in regional efforts to create the Meso-American Biological Corridor.

The armed conflicts in Central America have now been overcome. However, a sustained effort is still required of the Governments and the peoples of Central America, with the sustained support of the international community, to fully meet the commitments of the peace agreements and so that the root causes of those conflicts can be dealt with effectively. In that context, the role of the United Nations has been — and must continue to be — fundamental.

We have carefully studied the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central America (A/57/384) and the specific reports on Guatemala (A/57/584) and on the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) (A/57/336). One can see from the latter two reports that, although there has been some progress in meeting the commitments entered into under the peace agreements, much remains to be done to achieve a solid, lasting and irreversible peace in Guatemala. In particular, we are concerned at the increase in human rights violations, a situation that without doubt diminishes Guatemalans' hopes for the peace process.

Mexico considers that the presence of MINUGUA in Guatemala has been very positive; it has contributed certainty and reliability to the implementation of the peace agreements. This function has been broadly recognized by all political parties and by civil society and the people of Guatemala. This is why my Government, which has been fully committed to the peace process in Guatemala from the very outset, supports the request of the Government of Guatemala that the Mission continue as part of this process until the end of 2004, bearing in mind the election period that is approaching and the governmental transition that is scheduled for 2004. In this respect, my delegation notes with satisfaction the Secretary-General's report on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), which recommends extending that mandate until 31 December 2003, pursuant to a previous agreement. It also mentions the intention of the Secretary-General to begin consultations with Member States of the Organization concerning the request from Guatemala.

My delegation believes that an extension of the mandate of the Mission beyond 2003 should be agreed on, while we clearly establish which tasks the Government of Guatemala needs to carry out in order to consolidate the peace process.

We are in consultation with Member States, especially with friends of the peace process, with respect to the draft resolution on the renewal of the mandate of MINUGUA, which traditionally has been introduced by my delegation. I am confident that in the coming days we will be able to distribute and submit the text and we hope that text will be adopted by consensus.

Concerning consolidation of peace in El Salvador, my Government acknowledges the efforts of the Government of El Salvador in fulfilling the final commitments under the peace agreement so that the United Nations might conclude its work of verification of that process before the end of this year. In this regard, Mexico welcomes the measures adopted by the Government of El Salvador in order that the fund for the war victims is adequately established. As the headquarters of the peace agreement a decade ago and a friend of the peace process, Mexico supports the aspiration of the Government of El Salvador to end this period in a successful way and as quickly as possible.

Likewise, the Government of Mexico is encouraged by the efforts undertaken by the Governments of Guatemala and Belize within the Organization of American States to find a solution to the territorial dispute between those two countries. This is an example for the region and shows again that differences of this nature can be solved through negotiation.

To conclude, let me reiterate the commitment made by my Government to work actively with each one of the brother countries of the region for the sake of long-lasting peace and sustainable development.

**Mr. Valdivieso** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my honour to express the appreciation of my delegation to the Secretary-General for the presentation of the report on the situation in Central America, as well as the thirteenth report on human rights of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala

(MINUGUA). The contribution made by the United Nations in Central America during the last decade has led to important achievements that are reflected in the growing strength of the democratic institutions and the consolidation of peace, as well as the promotion and respect for human rights in Central America. The report on the situation in Central America mentions all of this and this is why I would like to point out that these results have led to a visible improvement in the living conditions in large areas of Central America previously afflicted by long years of armed conflict and whose current and future populations, especially those who belong to the most vulnerable sectors, can now look to the future with promise.

Two decades have already passed since we began the peace process in Central America and indeed from the very outset Colombia was permanently attentive to the unfolding of that process, not as a passive observer but as a friendly country profoundly interested in stimulating and supporting a firm and long lasting peace. It might seem paradoxical that a nation like mine, which has been confronting a domestic conflict for over four decades now, is trying at the same time to find solutions to achieve peace in other areas. But reality has shown that accompanying others during a peace process enriches one's own vision of peace and allows us to complement the efforts of others and the application of models that have some elements in common within their individual conditions and realities. So please allow me to reiterate the very strong commitment of my country to the consolidation of a long-lasting peace in Central America, faced with the need to promote profound transformations that will lead to economic and social development in the region.

Colombia, as a member of the group of friends of Guatemala, recognizes the very strong efforts made by our brother country, Guatemala, in fulfilling the conditions of the peace agreement, as well as the preponderant role that MINUGUA has played in this. Continuing the presence of MINUGUA in Guatemala means an essential guarantee to reach the objectives that have been proposed since the peace was signed. Colombia believes in the commitment of the people and Government of Guatemala to fulfil the peace agreement conditions. This is why we support the request to extend the mandate of MINUGUA beginning 1 January 2003.

Concerning El Salvador, we would highlight the efforts that have led the Government to conclude its fulfilment of the peace agreement, which means a true advance toward new stages of coexistence and progress in this country. As a member of the group of friends of the Secretary-General, we would likewise reiterate the need to have the Secretary-General formalize the final moment of verification here. If we do not have this final touch, we will be maintaining a situation of uncertainty for no good reason.

**Mr. Flores** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Denmark spoke earlier on behalf of the European Union, and my delegation fully supports his statement. Nevertheless, in the light of the very close ties that bind my country to the region, and because Spain belongs to the Group of Friends of Central America and Guatemala, I should like to make some additional remarks.

Spain is pleased that the political and economic dialogue between the European Union and Central America is continuing to make headway, as was confirmed by the Ministerial Conference held last May at Madrid under the presidency of Spain. At that Conference, the countries of the region made a commitment to consolidate integration, democracy and social and economic advances. Spain will continue, both within the European Union and in other forums, to make every effort to support those objectives.

The progress made in the negotiations on the territorial dispute between Guatemala and Belize, the efforts undertaken by President Bolaños of Nicaragua, and, above all, the tenth anniversary of the signing of the El Salvador peace agreements, which we will commemorate this year, give us considerable grounds for hope in this respect. However, a great deal remains to be done.

Spain would like at the outset to thank the Secretary-General for the quality and timeliness of the reports submitted by the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), whose regional deployment is playing an especially effective role in the follow-up to the implementation of the peace agreements in Guatemala.

In this respect, however, we note with regret the overall deterioration of the situation in the country this past year, especially in the area of human rights, as was noted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mrs. Hilani.

Our country views with deep concern the continuing threats and extortion attempts against persons and institutions working for the defence of human rights; the lack of progress made on the Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and the re-emergence of civil defence patrols. We are particularly concerned at the growing climate of impunity, as was evidenced by the overturning of the Gerardi convictions and the legal problems related to the application of the death penalty, the promised moratorium on which has not yet been implemented.

Spain is nevertheless confident that the commitment undertaken by President Portillo before the General Assembly last September with respect to the implementation of all aspects of the peace agreements will become a reality. Our country is aware of the efforts made by President Portillo to promote national reconciliation, which have led to recent legislative advances in specific areas, such as decentralization and racial discrimination. Our Government supports those fully.

Throughout this process, MINUGUA has provided invaluable assistance. Spain deems it advisable that next year the Mission draw up a transition plan identifying the Guatemalan institutions and organizations that would take over MINUGUA's functions. Given this necessary transition and the fact that general elections will be held in the country at the end of the next year, Spain would suggest an extension of MINUGUA's mandate beyond the end of 2003, along with a gradual reduction of its staff, with a view to facilitating the transition process and ensuring the initial stability of the incoming Government.

**Mr. Lagos Pizzati** (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The item on the situation in Central America has been under consideration by the General Assembly since 1983, at a time when the region was in the throes of a political crisis. Internal conflicts in certain countries had not only led to instability and confrontation within and among the countries of the region, but had also become a factor for confrontation within the context of the cold war — a situation that was in turn negatively affecting the economic and social development of the peoples of Central America.

Today, nearly two decades later, we are pleased at the positive outcome of the efforts deployed to address the situation: the decision of the Central American Governments to shoulder their responsibilities towards their peoples; the assistance of the United Nations; and the solidarity, support and cooperation of the international community, in particular that of friendly countries, all of which have an interest in seeing peace and stability take root in Central America.

The positive evolution of the situation in Central America has been reflected annually in the reports submitted by the Secretary-General on that item, in particular since 1987, when the General Assembly expressed its support for the agreement on "Procedure for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace in Central America", signed on 7 August 1987, and requested the Secretary-General to provide his support and good offices to the Governments of the region to achieve those objectives — a mandate that was fully reaffirmed and supported by the Security Council in 1989. Those resolutions became the basis for a greater involvement on the part of the United Nations in the quest to resolve Central American problems.

The complex and difficult process of peacemaking in Central America has led to substantive changes that have benefited the peoples of the region, which today enjoy greater freedom and democracy and whose human rights and fundamental freedoms are better safeguarded. In the economic and social fields, Governments are working to expand opportunities from the perspective of human-centred national development programmes.

However, as the Secretary-General stated in his most recent report on the situation in Central America, it must be noted that the peoples and the Governments of the region continue to face serious challenges, which, although they are not exclusive to our countries, must be addressed with the same intensity and priority that were accorded to the resolution of the Central American crisis and of the internal conflicts. This will enable us to avoid any delay in achieving our goals and to take advantage of our resources and our potential, in order to continue to promote the development and consolidation of the democratic institutions — those resulting from the peace process as well as others — that are necessary to enhance the quality of life of our peoples.

The support of the United Nations and of the international community will be pivotal in this respect, because while we must continue to combat those structural factors that led to the political and military crisis, we are doing so with limited financial and

natural resources, dealing all the while with the consequences of natural disasters. It will always be helpful for our own efforts to be complemented by assistance in order to minimize not only the region's vulnerability to the forces of nature but also the negative conditions resulting from an international economic environment that is affecting the primary economies of the countries of the region, and in order to consolidate the objectives of peace, freedom, democracy and development.

I should like to refer to a specific aspect of the situation of my country that is linked to the implementation of the Peace Agreements.

During the 1980s — a period that could be called the "lost decade", as far as the political, economic and social development of our people is concerned — El Salvador was involved in an internal armed conflict that fortunately came to an end with the signing of the El Salvador Peace Agreements on 16 January 1992. The implementation of the provisions of those Agreements was verified and monitored by the United Nations — a process that began even earlier, in 1991, when the United Nations began a limited operation to verify the San José Agreement on Human Rights, which was subsequently incorporated into the Peace Agreements.

The transition from war to peace provided a stimulus for the Salvadoran people. During that transition period they had to fully implement all of the commitments undertaken in the Peace Agreements and set out again on the path towards normal living conditions, free from the fear and violence that had profoundly affected all elements of society.

We firmly believe — and our conviction is shared by friendly countries that directly participated in or closely followed the development of the peace process in El Salvador — that by the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Peace Agreements, on 16 January this year, the commitments and obligations set out in those Agreements had been fully discharged.

In that context, we welcome the Secretary-General's comments that we have reached the final stage of the United Nations verification process in El Salvador. This can now be formalized with the confirmation of the commitment to the efficient and effective functioning of the Fund for the Wounded and War-Disabled — the final outstanding issue relating to the verification process.

It is important to reaffirm the political will shown by the Government of El Salvador during the entire process of implementing of the Peace Agreements and to provide information about the measures taken in this respect, with the approval by the Republic of a law and the consequent allocation of financial resources from the national budget for the adequate functioning of the Fund for the Wounded and War-Disabled, which will provide assistance to the beneficiaries.

It should be pointed out — and this is encouraging — that the report of the Secretary-General is able to conclude that the situation in El Salvador continues to evolve positively. Although not all of our problems have been resolved, there is no doubt that a very profound transformation has taken place within Salvadoran society itself, in particular as a result of the will and efforts of the people and the Government of El Salvador, as well as the interested political forces that want to establish a peaceful, democratic, just and equitable society.

We would like to stress that we have been able to rely on the unconditional support of the international community and the United Nations, and we express heartfelt thanks to them. We would like in particular to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, as well as to his predecessors, and to all of the personnel of the United Nations who in one way or another participated in the verification effort. We are confident that they will be able to continue their excellent work where it is required in other parts of the world.

In conclusion, my Government would like to reaffirm its steadfast commitment and determination to continue along the road towards the consolidation of a society in harmony — one that works for the economic and social progress not only of all the people of El Salvador, but also of the whole of Central America.

**Mr. Rosenthal** (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): My colleague, Ambassador Bruno Stagno of Costa Rica, has already spoken on behalf of all of the countries members of the Central American Integration System and, of course, we fully associate ourselves with his statement. I will therefore limit myself to speaking exclusively about the situation of Guatemala and, in particular, the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

In this respect, I would like first of all to thank the Secretary-General for having submitted the reports

contained in documents A/57/384 and A/57/584. I should also like to thank the Group of Friends of the peace process in Guatemala, who, as the representative of Mexico stated earlier, are preparing a draft resolution to be introduced shortly at this meeting. I should like in particular to acknowledge the work of the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations, whose officials are coordinating the consultations on that draft resolution.

In recent years, at about this time, we have considered the situation in Central America in general and the situation in Guatemala in particular. As the Assembly is aware, MINUGUA has been operating in my country since 1994. Its original objective was to verify compliance with an agreement on human rights, but its mandate was widened in 1997 to include support for parties that had signed the Peace Agreements in December 1996 by carrying out tasks in the areas of verification, facilitation, public information and good offices.

Those Agreements are a work in progress, characterized by advances, as well as by shortcomings and even by setbacks. The presence of MINUGUA in Guatemala has been a vital element in that process. Speaking in this Hall in September during the third plenary meeting, President Alfonso Portillo paid tribute to the role of the Mission, calling it the "critical conscience of the State".

Given the delay in the implementation of the Peace Agreements that became apparent during 2000, as a result of a number of factors whose origin and scope are described in the reports that the Secretary-General has periodically submitted to us, it was decided that the mandate of MINUGUA should be extended until the end of 2003, with its functions being progressively transferred to national entities or, where possible, to other United Nations bodies. That process is now under way, and the size of the Mission has been progressively reduced year by year with a view to its final withdrawal.

We have before us a number of reports of the Secretary-General that provide an account of the current status of the implementation of the Peace Agreements. Among them, I should like to mention the seventh report on the verification of compliance with the peace agreements (A/56/1003); the thirteenth report on human rights (A/57/336); the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central America, already cited; the report of the Secretary-General on the renewal of the mandate of MINUGUA (A/57/584); and the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of Olara Otunnu, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (A/57/402), which contains an account of Mr. Otunnu's visit to Guatemala from 24 to 28 February this year.

Together, those reports present a mixed picture of progress in some areas and of stagnation and even setbacks in others. Although we think that some of the reports — especially that concerning the situation in Central America — underestimate the progress, we recognize that shortfalls in compliance with the peace agreements have been accumulating and that many of the objectives originally pursued are far from being attained. Some of the areas in which setbacks have been observed relate precisely to sensitive matters, such as respect for human rights and the strengthening of civil society.

This is not the time to apportion blame for the less than satisfactory picture before us. Certainly, the Government led by President Alfonso Portillo has acknowledged its share of blame, related less to intentions than to the implementation of commitments. It must also be pointed out that the dynamic of the process has persistently generated resistance on the part of various pressure groups that have felt themselves to be adversely affected by particular actions. Moreover, in certain circles, recalcitrant attitudes persist with regard to much-needed reconciliation. Equally noteworthy are the surrounding circumstances: an economy very adversely affected by external factors — particularly by the falling prices of basic commodities — that result in high unemployment and in pressures on public-sector finances. Such pressures make it difficult to meet the financial implications of the commitments undertaken.

At any rate, although all participants in the process have reaffirmed their full alignment with the agreements, the fact is that many tasks remain outstanding. They have been organized and rescheduled by the parties signatory to the process, in broad consultation with civil society. The tasks to be accomplished in the period 1997-2000, and subsequently envisaged for the period 2001-2003, apparently will not be completed. But at least it is intended that they be reinvigorated, as agreed during the most recent meeting of the Consultative Group, held at Washington in February, whose work is

summarized in two recent reports on progress with regard to follow-up. For all of those reasons, it is essential to extend the presence of the Verification Mission.

But there is more: under the current scheme, the Mission would be withdrawn just as the current Administration concludes its term at the end of 2003, in a transitional period during which it would be desirable to maintain a United Nations presence in Guatemala for an additional year — that is, through 2004 — to ensure that the logic of the peace agreements continues into the future. That is why, when President Alfonso Portillo addressed the Assembly on 12 September, during the general debate, he pointed out:

> "My Government's term of office will expire in a little over a year, by which time the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) will be planning to withdraw. The Mission has played a fundamental role as the critical conscience of the State and has actively supported the fundamental changes that have taken place. We appreciate the work that it has done and we would like here to request the extension of its mandate to the end of 2004 so that it may accompany us as we make the transition to a new Administration. Our hope is that MINUGUA will hand over its functions in an orderly manner to national bodies and, where appropriate, to the programmes and agencies of the United Nations." (*A/57/PV.3, p. 8*)

Moreover, not only the Government is requesting a United Nations presence for a limited additional period. For example, at last month's intersectoral roundtable on dialogue, the culture of peace and reconciliation, chaired by the Archbishop of Guatemala and attended by more than 200 representatives of civil society organizations, many statements to that effect were heard. Along the same lines, Special Representative Olara Otunnu, states in his report, after noting what he describes as the very positive effects of MINUGUA, that there is "widespread concern, particularly within civil society, about the plans not to extend MINUGUA beyond the end of 2003" (*A/57/402, para. 20*).

Finally, we are aware of the practical and, above all, budgetary difficulties that the extension of MINUGUA would entail. But, I must emphasize that we are proposing to extend, not to perpetuate, its presence. As we have previously pointed out, we accept the idea of a gradual and progressive reduction of the Mission's personnel, followed by its final withdrawal. We do not think it would be inconsistent with that policy to envisage withdrawal at the end of 2004 rather than of 2003, particularly if we take into account the fact that we would be contemplating a very reduced presence in the final year compared with the previous years. Therefore, we trust that the States members of the Assembly will join us in our aspiration, which will enable us to capitalize on the Organization's considerable investment in effort and resources to support Guatemalans in the consolidation of their process of peace, democracy and development.

**Mr. Brown** (United States): Today we are here to address an important item, "The Situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development." The situations are different in each of the countries of the region, but all are of vital importance to the United States, as Central America is tied intimately to our country by geography, history and, most importantly, people. We have welcomed large numbers of Central Americans into the United States and we value the productive contributions they make to our society and the ties of kinship they have forged between our nations.

In the past year, the nations of the region have made significant progress on a set of objectives that serves to bind them together. Economic integration is deepening, bringing with it a series of important benefits. The United States has announced its intention to embark upon free trade agreement negotiations with the region. This agreement, when concluded, will have an enormous positive impact on the region's economic growth and development.

We applaud the completion of the facilitation process between Belize and Guatemala, under the auspices of the Organization of American States and with a significant contribution from Honduras, on their centuries-old border dispute. We note with concern, however, remaining border disputes in the region and urge Central American nations to resolve border issues for the greater good of the region and its inhabitants.

Central America is an example to the world of what can be accomplished when nations unite in

common goals. Not many years ago, the region was rife with bloody civil wars. Today, civilian authorities are firmly in control of all of the armed forces, which continue to professionalize and to find more constructive roles in society, such as disaster relief and assisting with border security. The Salvadoran peace accords of 1992 have come to a successful conclusion and we urge the Secretary-General to formally recognize that fact.

In Guatemala, though there has been progress in the peace process that began in 1996, much more remains to be accomplished, especially in the human rights and military reform areas. We endorse the recommendation that the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala remain to monitor progress through 2004.

Despite the many advances, the region still has a great deal of work to do. The Governments realize that corruption is a cancer that affects the entire society and literally takes food out of the mouths of hungry children. Intimately tied to corruption is the emergence of transnational criminals in the region. We urge the nations to participate fully in the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption's Follow-Up Mechanism, reduce impunity and go after corruption in their ranks. We ask each nation to redouble its efforts in the fight against international criminal organizations and the illegal, illicit transfer of arms, drugs and human beings. Each country should sign and ratify the remaining international anti-terrorism treaties.

We are pleased with the successes of the past and look forward to the new millennium with great hope, pledging to work hand in hand with the countries of Central America on all issues of mutual interest.

**The Acting President**: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to inform members that action on draft resolution A/57/L.20 will be taken at a later date.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 38.

**Agenda item 30 (*continued*)**

**The role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order**

**Draft resolution (A/57/L.10)**

**The Acting President**: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on agenda item 30 at its forty-third plenary meeting on Monday, 4 November 2002.

I should like to announce that, since the introduction of draft resolution A/57/L.10, the following countries have become sponsors: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Colombia, Cuba, Cyprus, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, the Gambia, Jordan, Lebanon, Mali and Zimbabwe.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/57/L.10. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

*Draft resolution A/57/L.10 was adopted* (resolution 57/12).

**The Acting President**: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 30?

*It was so decided.*

**Agenda item 167**

**South American zone of peace and cooperation**

**Draft resolution (A/57/L.7)**

**Mr. De Rivero** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): On 27 July 2002, the South American presidents, meeting in Guayaquil, Ecuador, decided to declare the South American subregion a zone of peace and cooperation.

The South American zone of peace and cooperation is not similar to the zones of peace that the non-aligned countries declared during the cold war to free some regions from the East-West conflict. The zones of peace of that time were directed towards rejecting the rivalries among the super-Powers and their blocs. Even better, the South American Zone of Peace and Cooperation is oriented to reject any hypothesis of war-like conflict among the South American democracies.

The empirical experience of contemporary international relations shows that democracies do not promote armed conflicts among themselves. In this context, the South American democracies want to consolidate this tendency by means of the South American Zone of Peace and Cooperation.

In its first stage, the zone of peace and cooperation would be aimed at promoting transparency and fostering confidence-building measures relating to defence and security among the South American countries, including the eradication of weapons of mass destruction, of anti-personnel mines and the illicit trade in small and light weapons. Later on, in Peru's view, the zone of peace and cooperation would proceed to an effective and gradual limitation of defence expenditures and then to a further complex stage — that being, disarmament.

This zone of peace is not a geopolitical objective in itself. Its ultimate goal should be to release resources with the aim of reducing poverty in South America, since poverty is imperilling the democratic Governments of our countries.

The South American zone of peace would also serve to create a favourable atmosphere for cooperation and to confront jointly the evils of terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime and subversion against democracy, all of which are today's main threats to sub-regional security.

Since the General Assembly has already been informed about the objectives of this zone of peace and cooperation, I would now like to present draft resolution A/57/L.7, entitled "South American zone of peace and cooperation". In its preambular paragraphs, the draft mentions the regional and subregional efforts that are the basis for the proposed zone of peace and cooperation. It recognizes the firm intent of the States of South America, taking into account the security needs of each country, to adopt measures to contribute to an effective and gradual limitation of defence expenditures in the region, with the aim of having more resources available for the economic and social development of their peoples.

This is a very important issue, because by fostering trust, transparency and the control of military expenditure, we are seeking to prevent the risk of a new arms race in the subcontinent. Furthermore, the cost of the latest generation of technological weapons and equipment is nearly inaccessible and — why not say so — even immoral, in light of the social demands of our countries. This goal, far from being utopian, is a realistic and sensible approach.

In the first operative paragraph, the General Assembly welcomes the declaration of the South American region as a zone of peace and cooperation. This aspect is important, because the declaration shows the praiseworthy effort that seeks to contribute to reinforcing international peace and security at this critical moment when the international community is threatened by international terrorism and by the proliferation and development of weapons of mass destruction.

The subsequent operative paragraphs commend and welcome the commitments included in the declaration of the zone of peace, such as the decision to ban the use, or threat of use of force among the South American States, the proscription of weapons of mass destruction, the eradication of anti-personnel mines in the region, the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, the fostering of transparency and the gradual limitation on arms purchases.

Finally, the last operative paragraph calls upon the States of the international community to contribute to and cooperate with the objectives set forth in the declaration regarding a South American zone of peace and cooperation.

The South American countries hope that this draft resolution, which is a subregional contribution to international peace and security, will be approved by consensus by this Assembly.

**Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation takes special pleasure in expressing its full support for the draft resolution contained in document A/57/L.7 under agenda item 167, "South American zone of peace and cooperation".

Ecuador and the other countries of South America base their international relations on the strictest respect for the norms and principles that are part of the legal tradition and, among others, those set forth in the United Nations Charter and the Organization of American States (OAS). Hence, the strengthening of peace and security and peaceful settlement of disputes, the defence and promotion of human rights, non-intervention in domestic affairs of other States, regional integration and harmonious development of our peoples are genuine pillars of our legal tradition and our role in the international community.

Over 30 years ago, the Andean countries began the first subregional integration process in Latin America. To date we have substantially moved

forward, and today Andean integration covers all aspects of life in the society — trade in goods and services; free circulation of people and capital; harmonization of macro-economic policies; physical integration; migration; the social dimension; and, naturally, a common foreign policy.

In this respect, the Andean Commitment to Peace, Security and Cooperation contained in the Declaration of Galapagos of 17 December 1989, as well as the Lima Commitment and Andean Charter for Peace and Security, adopted in June 2002, are instruments that guide our external policies and which underscore our decision to live in peace. Our vision is shared by the international community and our unequivocal decision to cooperate in the benefit of development and the well-being of our peoples.

As regards South American regional issues, we have sponsored the setting up of a free trade zone between the Andean community and the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), as well as strengthening and deepening relations between the two subregional associations. In that context, the Brasilia Communiqué, endorsed at the first meeting of the Presidents of South America in 2000, and the conclusions of the first meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Andean Community, MERCOSUR and Chile, held in La Paz last year, are particularly relevant to defining a common vision that establishes the foundation and actions for creating a South American zone of peace and cooperation.

Threats to international peace and security and to democratic stability and the monitoring of human rights by their very nature are different at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Armed conflicts between States and regular armies occur less frequently today, but terrorism, organized crime, drug-trafficking and ethnic and religious violence, underdevelopment, poverty and extreme inequality and social injustice are serious dangers that must be confronted jointly by all members of the international community in order to make progress in building a more secure, just and united world.

During the second meeting of the Presidents of South America, held in Guayaquil on 27 July 2002, a Declaration on a South American zone of peace and cooperation was adopted. It is undoubtedly a historic event that reflects the best traditions of understanding and peaceful coexistence between the peoples of the region. The South American peace zone, whose basis, mechanisms and guidelines are clearly reflected in the draft resolution before us today, is the expression of our firm decision to live in peace, confront threats to international peace jointly and cooperate effectively for the harmonious development of our peoples within a framework of democracy and social justice.

In conclusion, I wish to refer to an issue of special interest and significance to my country that rightly illustrates the positive direction of the relations and effective cooperation between the peoples of our region. Four years ago, through a long process of peaceful negotiation, with the participation of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the United States, Ecuador and Peru resolved the territorial dispute that had divided them since independence. Today, our countries are experiencing a period of mutual cooperation. Increased trade, closer political, cultural and diplomatic links, a common view of problems of the contemporary world, faith in law, commitment to regional integration and the fostering of confidence are singularly strong in our bilateral relations at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The real benefits of peace, security and cooperation are limitless.

**Mr. Moura** (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): Brazil welcomes Peru's introduction of the Declaration regarding a South American zone of peace and cooperation, adopted by the Presidents of South America.

Meeting at Guayaquil in July 2002, the Presidents reaffirmed our belief in democratic values and principles and in the defence of human rights, essential to advancing the structuring process, and in a common South American space. They also reaffirmed the necessary commitment to the main principles of this Organization: the search for peaceful solutions to conflicts and the prohibition of the use or threat of use of force.

The Guayaquil Consensus, a corollary to a process begun by the Presidents of South America at Brasilia in 2000, recognizes the importance of expanding and strengthening the regional infrastructure as a basic factor in the integration of the economic area of South America and in the development of its countries. In that context, the Presidents recognized that the interrelationship between infrastructure and development must be explored within the context of the principle of open regionalism, based on the results of

the analysis of five basic principles: a geo-economic perspective, social sustainability, economic efficiency, environmental sustainability and institutional development.

Convinced that the physical integration of the South American area will optimize the mobilization of the region's immense economic potential, the Presidents agreed to strengthen and expand South American integration processes through active policies to accelerate economic growth in a sustainable manner, reduce external vulnerability, improve the distribution of wealth and reduce poverty levels in the region.

The Declaration regarding a South American zone of peace and cooperation, which we are considering today, is framed within that context. It expresses the dedication and aspiration of our peoples to achieve a fruitful future of peaceful coexistence, lasting cooperation and well-being.

The Declaration regarding a zone of peace and cooperation in South America places into context our political willingness to continue to carry out actions of coordination and cooperation with a view to shaping a joint South American area.

The basic postulates that mark our region's trajectory in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, which were already part of many regional initiatives and subregional documents, are reaffirmed in that document: the prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear ones, the commitment to establish a regime for the gradual total eradication of anti-personnel landmines and the decisive effort to implement the recommendations of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

The Guayaquil Declaration is the fruit of a lengthy and ongoing process of dialogue between our countries on bilateral and subregional bases that has enabled us to build an atmosphere of trust and stability. Examples of that process are the Declaration of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile as a Zone of Peace, adopted at Ushuaia in 1998, the Declaration of Galapagos of 1989 and the Lima Commitment of 2002, which created the Andean region zone of peace.

Brazil is proud to belong to a region that is free of international conflicts and has also consistently had one of the lowest levels of military expenditure, which is basically directed at replacing obsolete equipment.

**Mr. Cappagli** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to express my delegation's appreciation for the fact that the General Assembly is taking up the Declaration regarding a South American zone of peace and cooperation, adopted at Guayaquil, Ecuador, on 27 July 2002.

This Declaration is an annex to the Guayaquil Consensus, by which the Presidents of South America drew up an ambitious plan of physical integration, modernization and development of subregional infrastructure in an area where weapon expenditures are among the lowest in the world.

The countries of the subregion have been developing an intensive effort aimed at consolidating, through confidence-building measures, a very friendly and productive relationship. That is part of the change in our concept of international security, which has been taking place since our countries regained their democratic institutions.

In that regard, we understand security to represent that which allows for the consolidation of basic values, such as representative democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and trade liberalization. This new concept of security, together with the processes for regional and subregional integration, have changed the security framework and have enabled us to see a neighbour no longer as a potential enemy or competitor but as a friend and partner, eliminating possible conflicts.

Argentina was a pioneer in the promotion of that kind of initiative, whose objective is to establish in the region a new dialogue with a cooperative focus. There is no doubt about the importance of peace in the process of physical, economic and trade integration. The zone of peace of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile, adopted in Ushuaia, Argentina in 1998, represents an especially significant precedent in the creation of an environment of peaceful and cooperative security in the Southern Cone.

The declaration of a South American Zone of Peace and Cooperation reflects once more, this time comprehensively and in a political document, the various commitments already assumed by the countries in the subregion through legal instruments. It is our intention to continue working on the consolidation and promotion of those commitments in the framework of dialogue in the Committee on Hemispheric Security of the Organization of American States, which is

responsible for the analysis and consideration of all issues related to security in the hemisphere.

**Mr. Talbot** (Guyana): Guyana is pleased to join sister South American republics in co-sponsoring draft resolution A/57/L.7, on the South American zone of peace and cooperation. We welcome and support the timely initiative of the delegation of Peru to include this item on the agenda of the present session of the General Assembly.

At Guayaquil, on 27 July of this year, the leaders of our continent, recalling the commitment adopted in the Brasilia Communiqué of 1 September 2000 to create a South American zone of peace, declared South America to be a zone of peace and cooperation. They further declared, inter alia, that

> "in South America the use of, or the threat of the use of, force between States shall be banned, in keeping with the principles and provisions of the United Nations Charter and of the Charter of the Organization of American States."

The adoption of that Declaration represents an important milestone in the relations of the countries of South America. It is a historical decision in the best tradition of understanding and peaceful coexistence among the peoples of the region.

In its implementation, our countries face many common challenges, not least of which is the deleterious impact on our societies of persistent poverty and inequality, transnational crime, the illicit trade in drugs and in small arms and light weapons and the threat of international terrorism. These all threaten to nullify the hard-won freedoms and most cherished values of our peoples. They must be confronted with determination and resolve.

The challenges to which I refer will be surmounted only through the fullest and most effective cooperation of all concerned. Through declaring South America as a zone of peace and cooperation, the leaders of our continent have made a solemn commitment to create conditions necessary for success in addressing these challenges.

My Government subscribes fully to the objectives set forth in the Guayaquil Declaration. We stand ready to cooperate fully with all countries in the region and beyond to promote peace, security, development and the overall well-being of our peoples and of the region as a whole.

We therefore look forward to the contribution and cooperation of States of other regions in the achievement of the objectives of the declaration on a South American zone of peace and cooperation.

**Mr. Valdés** (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution before the General Assembly today, entitled "South American zone of peace and cooperation", is directly and closely related to the fundamental concepts underlying the very existence and reason for being of the United Nations.

The Preamble to the Charter of the Organization states that one of its purposes is "to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security". It then adds as a fundamental purpose "the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples".

At the second meeting of Presidents of South America, held in Guayaquil, Ecuador, on 26 and 27 July 2002, devoted to the approval of the Guayaquil Consensus on Integration, Security and Infrastructure for Development, the South American heads of State, in accordance with the aforementioned purposes of the Charter, issued a formal declaration establishing South America as a zone of peace and cooperation. As the declaration of the Presidents states, this is a historic act reflecting the best tradition of understanding and peaceful coexistence among the peoples of the region and is intended to become an integral part of a concrete reality in South America.

Cooperation for peace and the development of common actions in the area of security are necessary to ensure and to maintain the pace of progress towards political, economic and social integration among the countries of South America and to further the development and well-being of the peoples.

Ongoing dialogue, whether bilateral or multilateral, has been fundamental for creating, on solid bases, a climate of growing transparency and trust that preserves and ensures peace and friendship among our peoples. That was made especially clear in those moments when our democratic institutions were put to the test as a result of the economic crises that have afflicted many countries in our region.

The regions of Latin America and the Caribbean in general, and South America in particular, have persevered in their commitment to peace and security, as demonstrated by the multiple bilateral and subregional initiatives of trust and cooperation. Some of those experiences are truly unprecedented, such as the work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, at the request of the Governments of Argentina and Chile, on a standardized common methodology for the measurement of defence spending of the two countries.

We note with satisfaction that this programme, also known as a standardizing methodology for defence expenditures, has been received with interest by other countries in our region, leading to conversations for developing similar efforts. Based on the existence and implementation of common methodologies for the accounting of defence spending, it is possible to optimize the common efforts aimed at rationalizing and reducing expenses of this type, generating greater confidence and transparency at the bilateral, subregional and regional levels.

Peace and development are two notions that are indissolubly linked. The South American Presidents, upon subscribing to the Guayaquil Consensus on Integration, Security and Infrastructure for Development and, in that context, declaring South America to be a zone of peace and cooperation, did nothing more than to recognize that the threats, concerns and other challenges to the peace and security of nations are of a varied nature and multidimensional scope, including political, economic, social, health and environmental aspects, among others, that go far beyond the traditional military aspect of the question.

From this multidimensional perspective, military institutions, in conjunction with civil society, have an important role to play in building a continent of peace that, united and in solidarity, plays an active role in the international system.

South America is a region in which peaceful coexistence has been the norm. Dialogue and the privilege of choosing peaceful options for the settlement of conflicts have been the rule.

For years, the States of South America have assumed and rigorously adhered to the commitment to entirely prohibit from the region weapons of mass destruction. More recently, we have done the same with regard to the prohibition of anti-personnel mines and have assumed the commitment to achieve as quickly as possible their eradication, as well as to implement the recommendations of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Accordingly, the Government of Chile has given these policies, which involve both disarmament and humanitarian issues, its vigorous and resolute support. For more than a decade, it has steadfastly supported the development of numerous initiatives in confidence-building and transparency at the regional, sub-regional and bilateral levels. Naturally, it was with great satisfaction that Chile subscribed to the Guayaquil Consensus on Integration, Security and Infrastructure for Development and to the declaration of South America as a zone of peace and cooperation.

We acknowledge the different circumstances and situations that exist in other regions of the world in the area of peace and cooperation for development, and we hope that this initiative will be an additional and constructive asset for the international community as a whole in its ongoing search for ways to promote peaceful co-existence and the development and well-being of peoples.

**Ms. Rivero** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Perhaps we do not have much to add to what has already been said by the preceding speakers. But we understand that in the dynamics of the processes that exist in every region of the world, what matters is the vision that the countries of the region have. This is why Uruguay would like to express in this debate its firm support for the declaration of the South American Zone of Peace and Cooperation, endorsed during the second meeting of the Presidents of South America last July in Guayaquil.

For Uruguay, this declaration of peace and cooperation is not and end in itself. Rather, it contains a broader commitment, like that originally expressed in the Brasilia Communiqué of 2000. It is clear that the development and implementation of confidence-building measures, full observance of international instruments related to nuclear and conventional disarmament, and non-use of the threat of force all naturally point to the creation of an area of peace that extends beyond the borders of individual countries. But it must also be obvious that an area of peace cannot be the final objective, but rather the beginning of something more ambitious.

The geographical contiguity of our countries, which in other times fuelled conflict, has today become a factor that promotes unity and cooperation. Indeed, our region is distinguished in the international scene for having once and for all overcome territorial disputes in a peaceful and negotiated way, showing our spirit of compromise and our adhesion to international law. This spirit, though it shows that there is a firm determination to bolster security in the region, is even more important in that it allows us to have active cooperative processes, many of which are currently being implemented.

The national priorities with respect to strengthening democracy and respect for and defence of human rights, individual and collective, are several of the common elements of what could be called the "South American agenda". They are common not because they are called common, but because they are considered to be indispensable in order to reach a state of security in which the process of developing our countries can be accelerated.

These actions, aimed at consolidating peace, security, cooperation and development, are the foundations of this broader commitment that we mentioned at the beginning of our intervention. Our countries have undertaken a dialogue on regional security that takes into account the humanitarian, social and economic aspects of the question. Uruguay believes that that dialogue is the natural process towards a true regional integration. The declaration of South America peace and cooperation, which we hope will receive the international community's recognition today, is a step in this direction.

Uruguay does not see peace solely as an absence of conflict. We see it as a situation that includes other positive elements such as security and freedom. They form the sole context that will allow our Governments, which are responsible for providing for the well-being and prosperity of their peoples, to meet the commitment that has been given to them and is expected of them.

**Mr. Valdivieso** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to speak on behalf of Colombia in the plenary of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly on item 167, whose inclusion in the agenda was requested by the Permanent Mission of Peru.

My country, along with other South American sister nations, sponsored draft resolution A/57/L.7, which welcomes the declaration of our Presidents in which they declared South America to be a zone of peace and cooperation. This declaration, adopted in Guayaquil, Ecuador, on 27 July, is one of the results of the Brasilia Communiqué of 1 September 2000. In that document, the Presidents of South America — in developing the spirit of harmony and understanding between our countries, with our geographic proximity and our shared values — agreed to a wider and deeper regional cooperation and solidarity in order to deal with fundamental issues such as democracy, trade, infrastructure for integration, illicit drugs and connected crimes, and information, knowledge and technology.

In the declaration, which we hope that the General Assembly will welcome today, our countries propose to form the South American Zone of Peace and Cooperation on the basis of strengthening our cooperation and consultation mechanisms in the area of defence and security. For the Government of Colombia, committed to implement a democratic security and defence strategy to confront terrorism and the global problem of illicit drugs that finances it, cooperation from the entire international community and the South American region is fundamental.

Our region must strengthen its cooperation in the areas of intelligence; police operations; control of trafficking in, and the diversion of, chemical precursors; control of the illicit trade in arms, munitions and explosives; and the fight against money-laundering, as agreed in the Brasilia communiqué, where our Presidents decided to create a joint mechanism for periodic consultations among institutions in charge of the combat against drug trafficking and related crimes.

We must undertake a major regional effort to overcome illicit drug trafficking, because, as President Uribe of Colombia stated recently before the General Assembly, "We have only managed to seize 20 per cent of the drugs that are shipped from our country." We should fully acknowledge the shared responsibility of producing, transit and consuming countries — a principle that our Presidents, several years ago, determined to be fundamental in relations and cooperation among States.

Colombia welcomes the definitive solution that has been found to territorial disputes among the countries of our region, which has made possible the

Declaration on South America as a zone of peace and cooperation. Nevertheless, our democratic stability and the integrity of the political, economic and social structures of our countries still face grave threats, such as terrorism, corruption and extreme poverty. That is why, like other countries of the region, we believe that democracy in Latin America should be strengthened through the ongoing promotion and safeguarding of the rule of law and human rights.

The democratic security and defence strategy adopted by Colombia to fight the violence in the country aims to consolidate the rule of law and to guarantee human rights for all Colombians: our farmers, so that they are not displaced from their land; our businessmen, so that they are not victims of kidnapping; our journalists, so that they are not threatened; our labour leaders, so that they can exercise their duties freely; and our human rights defenders, so that they can work without intimidation.

Democratic security, as President Uribe has said, is aimed at protecting all citizens of a pluralistic nation that is open to fraternal and creative debate — a nation that can count on the solidarity of its South American brothers in its fight against violence and terrorism.

For this reason, we welcome today the South American zone of peace and cooperation, because we see it as a resolute commitment in the fight against threats to the security of our States — a commitment to coordinated action and concerted common strategies to confront together these serious threats to the security of our countries and to the stability of our region.

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/57/L.7.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.7?

*Draft resolution A/57/L.7 was adopted* (resolution 57/13).

**The Acting President**: May I also take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 167?

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.*